

Date: August 26, 2003

To: Federal Communications Commissions, Washington, DC

Petitions for Reconsideration Regarding the Video Relay Service Interim Per-Minute compensation Rate – Docket No. 98-67

The National Alliance of Black Sign Language Interpreters (NAOBI, Inc.) would first like to thank the FCC for their work related to a much-needed national telecommunications system. Through your efforts, those who are hearing, deaf, and hard of hearing have been able to utilize this new medium of telecommunication in a manner that is close to normal communication speed. Lawyers, doctors, educators, professionals, and even grandparents (both deaf and hearing) are able to communicate with each other more effectively. The feedback has been overwhelmingly positive. Persons who are deaf and/or hard of hearing are able to communicate in their native language with members of the hearing community because of the FCC's passage of Video Relay Service.

NAOBI, Inc. would greatly appreciate if you would reconsider the Video Relay Service Interim Compensation Rate. The impact of the proposed rate reduction will affect those who work as Video Relay Interpreters as well as consumers both deaf and hearing. The layoffs of certified and qualified video relay interpreters would affect the quality of services received by the hearing, hard of hearing, and deaf community of users. Imagine traveling to another country, and needing a translator/interpreter but the only one available would be someone who is unable to understand the English language effectively. Imagine the difficulty the "flow of communication" would be if one wanted to speak with someone regarding a job interview, a lawyer, doctor, or other professional. That person would not be able to understand the nuances, culture or language to a degree that was acceptable. This is the same concern with sign language interpreters who are unskilled and unqualified. Consumers would prefer quality service and would be willing to pay more for a certified/skilled and qualified transliterator and/or interpreter.

However, if uncertified, unskilled and unqualified interpreters were utilized, this would cause a higher risk of misunderstandings and miscommunications among consumers. For example, imagine a doctor attempting to communicate with a patient with an interpreter who is unskilled, unqualified and uncertified. The potential for miscommunication and misunderstandings of both parties could result in grave consequences

In this new age of technology, more consumers (hearing, deaf, and hard of hearing) have access to web cams and high speed Internet services. More consumers in their homes, agencies, businesses, organizations, classrooms, and universities utilize the services of web cams. With this, telecommunications access will increase. Hearing, deaf, and hard of hearing consumers will be able to make video relay calls in alarming rates and we must be ready for its usage. More than ever before, members of the deaf and hard of hearing communication will be able to participate in the mainstream of the hearing community

more effectively. Bridging the communication gap among the hearing and deaf as well as the hard of hearing has been long overdue. Maintaining video relay interpreters as the current rate will foster more communication equality for all.

NAOBI, Inc. strongly recommends that the FCC reconsider its per-minute compensation rate. This will ensure that the hearing, deaf, and hard of hearing communities will have the level of excellent telecommunications service that is afforded for all!

Respectfully,

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